

A Survey of Reading and Internet Use Habits among Undergraduate Students in Selected University Libraries in Nigeria

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Abstract

This study investigates the reading and internet use habits among undergraduate students in university libraries; using Obafemi Awolowo University and University of Ibadan as case study. Survey design was adopted and the population consisted of undergraduate students of the U.I and OAU. The multistage random sampling technique was used to select a sample size of 214 and questionnaire was the major instrument for data collection. Frequency distribution percentage and cross tabulation method were used in analyzing the data. The findings revealed that respondents from both university libraries 50(25.4%) and 55 (27.9%) read text. It was also indicated that the respondents read for academic purposes and research purposes and used the Internet for examination purposes and project work. The result also stated that most of the respondents in OAU read newspapers 60(30.3%) while 38(19.2%) of respondents read story book in U.I. Majority 80(40.6%) read for three hours in a day in U.I and 30(15.2%) in OAU. It was noted that all the respondents in both university libraries were of the opinion that some of the problems affecting their reading habit include: lack of awareness of information, lack of good illumination, sitting arrangement and inadequate information resources. There is need to continually educate students on the proper balance that they should maintain between utilitarian and other purposes of reading and between reading and internet use activities for academic related purpose. The problem of inadequate computing and internet access facilities in university libraries should also be tackled so as to facilitate effective reading and internet use by students.

Keywords: Reading, Internet use habit, undergraduate students

INTRODUCTION

University libraries are primarily established to support teaching, learning and research activities of parent institution. University students patronize their libraries to retrieve accurate, adequate, relevant and current information in electronic format for effective teaching, learning and research work.

Manzoor (2010) defined undergraduate as a student of university who has not yet received a first degree or the body member of a university or a college who has not taken his first degree; a student in any school who has not completed his course.

University library users include undergraduate, postgraduate students, researchers, information professionals, staffs and other researchers from outside the university who intends to use the university library. The undergraduate students are expected to read further after class instructions to gather information for class work, assignments, seminars, term papers and project and this information could be retrieved from the resources in the library. The undergraduate students constitute the greatest fraction of university library users since the universities admit more undergraduates than postgraduate students. This factor deserves special attention while resources and services are provided for them.

Upon their admission into the university, the university is supposed to take these factors into consideration and provide materials and services suitable to their different categories and intellectual capabilities. Bukhari (2006) concluded that undergraduate library materials should be arranged in a way that would ensure easy accessibility and retrieval. Undergraduate students need to be properly encouraged and educated on the use of the library, they also need to be provided with adequate and comfortable reading space, good seating arrangement and proper ventilation, in order to sustain their interest in library use (Htikhar, 2002).

Reading is an attempt to absorb the thought of an author and know what the author is conveying. It is principally through reading that people obtain knowledge. People who can either read or write are described as illiterate, and such people are often limited to the knowledge gained from oral communication chances (Busayo, 2005). Many activities of ordinary life require the ability to read. Moreover reading enriches one's understanding of how language is used, thereby improving one's spoken and written language. Additionally, in-depth reading helps to develop the mind and personality of a person; it enriches intellectual abilities; provides insights into human problems and influences attitudes and behavior (Eden and Ofre, 2010). In other words reading helps to mould a

person's character. This, of course, depends in reading the right type of books; that is, books that entertain but, at the same time, educate (Busayo, 2005).

Reading enlightens the mind, makes the intellect sharper and makes an individual travel far without motion (Braunger & Lewis, 2006). Broadly speaking, reading has been accepted as an interactive process, a communication process, an active process and a meaning inducing process. Reading is not just about printed matter, but about the ability to interpret anything that is intended to convey a message or that which is to enable communication. Reading can be said to be the bedrock of most forms of learning activities culminating in literacy. One of the most important factors in education is ability to read, understand and critically apprehend the text (Hetting & Knapp, 2001). To be capable of doing these, students must develop their reading habits on daily basis. Capability of understanding text and reading habits should be developed from early childhood through the whole life (Beck & Mckeown, 2001). Reading habits are also vital part of lifelong learning concept (Raeyaeckers, 2002).

The Internet is one of the defining technologies of the digital age and it is a global system which is interconnected to computers and it provides many benefits to its users, including access to information from distant documents and databases that can be read and studied to prove knowledge (Larose, 2000). The internet combines and presents through the same medium the virtues of print and multimedia resources. With the internet, students can improve their learning by gaining access to information and materials available on line can be read on line or down loaded and printed to read later. The internet is also not just a passive medium that students might explore to obtain information on their own. It is increasingly also being used by educational institutions and researchers as a flexible medium for delivering online education to distant or on campus students (Eden and Ofre, 2010).

The Internet provides scientists, lecturers and students, access to on-traditional sources of information at any point of the globe. It is becoming more and more convenient to access the Internet. Trajkovski (2001) stated that about 5 years ago, only three million people were connected to the Internet in the whole world, but now its number has grown to 300 million. The Internet is fast changing the methods for accessing and using information and research activities. It has introduced new concepts of the teaching process and is recasting the roles played by the participants of the educational process.

The Internet is now a means by which the digital divide between the developed and developing countries is gradually closing up. Studies have established the fact that the most conspicuous users of the Internet are adolescents and undergraduates (Kausar & Zobias, 2006; Omotayo, 2006; Ofodu, 2012).

To determine factors influencing Internet usage in Nigeria, Oji, (2007) have highlighted the growing incidences of undergraduate students using the Internet not necessarily for academic purposes, but for anti-social activities such as racketeering, black mail, fraud, pornography, and so on. This probably explains why cybercafés patronized by undergraduate students in many Nigerian cities and towns are often raided by law enforcement officials.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The general objective is to examine reading and internet habits among undergraduate students in University of Ibadan and Obafemi Awolowo University. The specific objectives of this study are to:

- (1) determine the types of information resources/sources available to read by the undergraduate students in both university;
- (2) ascertain the students purpose of reading and using the internet by the undergraduate students;
- (3) find out frequency of reading habit by the undergraduate students;
- (4) find out the problems hindering reading effectiveness and internet use by the undergraduate students.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Leu (2000) pinpointed that "Literacy is rapidly and continuously changing as new technologies for information and communication repeatedly appear and new environments for exploring these technologies are continuously crafted by users." Does computer technology affect college students' reading habits? Lyons (2009) claimed that the computer revolution is unlikely to significantly affect reading habits in the perspective of history and current literacy trends. However, other researcher believed that computers and the Internet are changing the way people read (Lamb, 2005). Additionally, "this new media and online literacy belong to and affect people of all ages" (Hagwood, 2003). Caverly and Peterson (2002) also indicated that,

Today, computer technology is integrated into almost every aspect of learning in higher education: textbooks arrive with CD-ROMs; homework is delivered and graded on the World Wide Web (WWW); and assignments are designed to be completed collaboratively through electronic mail.

In fact, "the Internet becomes an important part of college students' lives, not only for their studies and daily routines, but as a tool for getting to know other people and the rest of the world" (Chou & Hsiao, 2000).

Educators are correct in the assumption that undergraduate students are heavier users of the Internet than the general population (Nie, Simpsen, Stepaikova, & Zheng, 2005; UCLA World Internet Project, 2004). According to Statistics Canada (2006), 80% of adults with at least some post-secondary education use the Internet, compared with 49% of adults with less education. Jones and Madden (2002) reported that 72% undergraduate students check their e-mail at least one a day, 85% own their own computers, 60% have downloaded music files, 73% use the Internet more often than the library, and 58% have checked course grades on-line and 26% instant message daily. Equivalent information on undergraduate students is not readily available.

In a study of the Internet addiction of 910 Taiwan college students, Chou and Hsiao (2000) found that college students who are addicted to the Internet spent an average of 17.66 hours on BBSs, 6.58 hours on the WWW, 3.47 hours on e-mail, and 5.47 hours on games every week; whereas, those who are not addicted spent an average of 6.6 hours on BBSs, 3.94 hours on the WWW, and 1.42 hours on e-mail every week. This interesting fact incited me to conduct a pilot study to inquire 83 college students in my writing class of their online access hours. 42% of them admitted that they spend more than 3 hours online and 57% of them spend 1 to 2 hours online every day. These data imply that college students do spend more time reading information online than reading offline every day.

Cull (2011) opined that while the Internet is a text-saturated world, reading online screens tends to be significantly different from reading printed text. In his study, he reviewed literature from a variety of disciplines on the technological, social, behavioural, and neuro-scientific impacts that the Internet is having on the practice of reading. A particular focus was given to the reading behaviour of emerging university students, especially within Canada and the United States. A brief overview was provided of the recent transformation of academic libraries into providers of online digital text in addition to printed books and other materials. On the other hand, it seems it has had some negative effects on their reading habits. Instead of people reading books, they now listen to people talk on YouTube, Facebook etc.

So, they do not feel the need to read any longer.

Reading interest or preferences seemed to be differed with different age levels. Mellon (1990) surveyed the leisure reading choices of rural teenagers, and found that their reasons for leisure reading were for entertainment and for acquiring information. Magazines and newspapers were found to be the most preferred reading materials of teenagers.

Reading is a key to a wealth of experience that links people in a way far beyond distance or time. According to Noor, et al (2010), reading provides experience through to the individual so that he may expand his horizons, identify, extend and intensify his interest and gain deeper understanding of himself and other human being and of the world. Reading is important for students in general in order to cope with new knowledge in a changing world – that of the technological age.

METHODOLOGY

The descriptive survey research design was adopted for this study and the target population consisted of undergraduate students of University of Ibadan and Obafemi Awolowo University. There were twelve thousand five hundred and sixty six (12,566) undergraduate students in University of Ibadan in thirteen (13) faculties, while Obafemi Awolowo University had thirty thousand and ninety eight (30,098) undergraduates in thirteen faculties (13) which gave a total of forty-two thousand six hundred and sixty four undergraduate students (42,664). Simple random sampling technique was employed to select one hundred and fifty-one (151) undergraduates from Obafemi Awolowo University and Sixty-three from University of Ibadan which gave a total of two hundred and fourteen undergraduate students (214). Questionnaire was the major instrument used for the data collection. Data collected was analyzed using descriptive statistics such as tables, frequencies and percentages.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Questionnaire Distribution and Return Rate

A total of two hundred and fourteen (214) copies of the questionnaire were administered. Out of the total number of questionnaire administered (214), one hundred and ninety seven (197) were duly filled and returned, while the remaining seventeen (17) were not returned. This represented a response rate of 92%.

Demographic Information of Respondents

On gender distribution of the respondents, it was indicated that OAU had the highest number 66(33.5%) of the female respondents than that of UI with the response rate of 54(24.4%) but the number of male respondents 42(21.3%) in U.I is greater than that of OAU. It was deduced that, there were more female undergraduate students used in the study than male undergraduate students.

The highest age range of the respondents in Obafemi Awolowo University was < less than 20yrs 35(17.7%) while the least had > greater than 49yrs with 2(1.0%) but UI had 30 (15.2%) respondents that was less than 20 years of age and the least in UI recorded 10(5.1%) respondents that fall within 49 years old.

About 25(12.6%) respondents in Obafemi Awolowo University were in 200 level while those in 400 level had the least 15(7.6%). But in University of Ibadan, equal number 30(15.2%) of the undergraduates students were in 100 level and 200 level while those in 400 level and 500 level in UI record the least equal number 10(5.1%).

Table 1: Demographic Information of Respondents

Demographic		OAU		UI		Total	
		N	%	N	%	N	%
Sex	Male	35	17.8	42	21.3	77	39.1
	Female	66	33.5	54	27.4	120	60.9
Total		101	51.3	96	48.7	197	100
Age (years)	< 20	35	17.7	30	15.2	65	32.9
	20 - 29	30	15.2	30	15.2	60	30.4
	30 - 39	20	10.2	20	10.2	40	20.4
	40 - 49	10	5.1	10	5.1	20	10.2
	> 49	2	1.0	10	5.1	12	6.1.
Total		97	49.2	100	50.8	197	100
Level	100	20	10.2	30	15.2	50	25.4
	200	25	12.6	30	15.2	55	27.8
	300	20	10.2	20	10.2	40	20.4
	400	15	7.6	10	5.1	25	12.7
	500	17	8.6	10	5.1	27	13.7
Total		97	49.2	100	50.8	197	100

Research question 1: what is the type of information resources available to undergraduate students in the university libraries?

Table 2 revealed that majority of the respondents indicated that e-mail services were the information resources available in OAU library with the response rate of 144(42.5%) while respondents at U.I with response rate of 80(40.6%) agree that internet service were available. The table also shows that the following resources were available in the university libraries; Newspapers, reference resources, books, journal, Audio-visual materials, online public access catalogue.

Table 2: Types of Information Resources Available

S/N	Information resources	Strongly Agree		Agree,		Disagree		Strongly disagree		Total N
		OAU N %	UI N %	OAU N %	UI N %	OAU N %	UI N %	OAU N %	UI N %	
1	Books	30 15.2	30 15.2	20 10.2	25 12.7	8 4.2	15 7.6	30 15.2	39 19.8	197
2	Journals	40 20.3	30 15.5	8 4.0	30 15.2	8 4.0	35 17.6	10 5.1	36 18.3	197
3	Newspapers	48 24.4	10 5.1	48 24.4	10 5.1	8 4.0	15 7.6	28 14.2	20 10.2	197
4	Reference resources	120 60.9	10 5.1	12 6.1	10 5.1	12 6.1	5 2.5	8 4.0	10 5.1	197
5	CD-ROM search	5 2.5	10 5.1	15 7.6	55 27.9	12 6.1	5 2.5	8 4.0	87 44.2	197
6	Audio-visual materials	55 27.9	10 5.1	40 20.3	64 32.5	5 2.5	5 2.5	8 4.0	5 2.5	197
7	Internet services	70 35.5	70 35.5	5 2.5	10 5.1	5 2.5	5 2.5	12 6.1	20 10.2	197
8	Online public access catalogue (OPAC)	93 47.2	2 1.0	5 2.5	65 32	10 5.1	5 2.5	7 3.6	10 5.1	197
9	Online Databases	55 27.9	44 22.3	5 2.5	55 27.9	14 7.1	5 2.5	9 4.6	10 5.1	197
10	e-mail services	77 39.1	6 3.0	67 3.4	5 2.5	20 10.2	5 2.5	7 3.6	10 5.1	197

Research Question 2: What is the purpose of reading and using the internet by undergraduate students in the university libraries?

Majority 95(48.2%) of the respondents from OAU read for research purposes, while only 35(17.8%) of them read for online application/registration purposes. For U.I, most of the respondents 85(43.4%) read for academic purposes, while only 7(3.5%) of them disagree that they read to complete the assignment.

Table 3: Purpose of Reading by the Undergraduate Students

S/N	Purposes	Strong Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree		Total N
		OAU N %	UI N %	OAU N %	UI N %	OAU N %	UI N %	OAU N %	UI N %	
1	Academic purposes/ course work	35 17.8	45 22.8	30 15.2	40 20.3	25 12.7	20 10.2	1 0.5	1 0.5	197
2	Complete assignments	50 25.4	40 20.3	30 15.2	30 15.2	25 12.7	15 7.6	5 2.5	2 1.0	197
3	For research purposes	70 35.5	30 15.2	25 12.7	20 10.2	25 12.7	15 7.6	6 3.0	6 3.0	197
4	Communicate with friends and colleagues	35 17.8	30 15.2	25 12.7	35 17.8	30 15.2	30 15.2	6 3.0	6 3.0	197
5	Online application/ registration examination	20 10.2	15 7.6	15 7.6	45 22.8	40 20.3	25 12.7	25 12.7	12 6.1	197
6	Source of material for project writing	20 10.2	20 10.2	20 10.2	35 17.8	35 17.8	35 17.8	35 17.8	20 10.2	197
7	Personal knowledge	40 20.3	40 20.3	40 20.3	30 15.2	20 10.2	10 5.1	10 5.1	7 3.4	197

Table 4 revealed that majority of the respondents 77(39.1%) from OAU used the internet for research purposes, while 86(43.7%) of them agree that the internet was used for examination purposes. For U.I, 55(27.9%) respondents used the internet for project work, while the least 11(6.1%) of them used the internet for research purposes.

Table 4: Purpose of Internet Use by the Undergraduate Students

S/N	Purposes	Strong Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree		Total N
		OAU N	UI %	OAU N	UI %	OAU N	UI %	OAU N	UI %	
1	Research purposes	77	39.1	6	3.6	67	3.4	5	2.5	197
2	Personal knowledge	36	18.3	28	14.2	16	8.1	18	9.1	197
3	Project work	30	15.2	30	15.2	25	12.7	25	12.7	197
4	Examination purpose	66	33.5	64	32.5	20	10.2	20	10.2	197
5	Chatting	40	20.3	30	15.2	8	4.1	30	15.2	197
6	Online application/ registration	25	12.7	25	12.7	30	15.2	18	9.1	197
7	Discussion	22	11.2	33	16.8	16	8.1	30	15.2	197
8	Assignment	36	18.3	25	12.7	8	4.1	38	19.3	197

Research Question 3: what is the frequency of reading habit by the undergraduate students in the university libraries?

Most of the respondents in OAU read Newspapers 60(30.5%), novel 77(39.0%) and comic 93(47.2%) on daily basis, while magazines 30(15.2%), newspaper 35(17.8%) and textbooks 38(19.3%) were read on daily basis in U.I. Also, the least respondents 2(1.0%) from OAU read drama on weekly basis, while only 5(2.5%) from U.I read story book twice a week.

Table 5: Frequency of Reading Information Sources of the Undergraduate

S/N	Information Recourses	Daily		Weekly		Twice a week		Monthly		Total N
		OAU N	UI %	OAU N	UI %	OAU N	UI %	OAU N	UI %	
1	Magazines	20	10.2	30	15.2	30	15.2	25	12.7	197
2	Newspapers	60	30.5	35	17.8	20	10.2	38	19.3	197
3	Text book	38	19.3	38	19.3	25	12.7	25	12.7	197
4	Story book	5	2.3	10	5.1	15	7.6	55	27.9	197
5	Novel	77	39.0	6	3.0	67	3.4	5	2.5	197
6	Comic	93	47.2	2	1.0	5	2.5	65	32	197
7	Drama	30	15.2	30	15.2	2	10.2	25	12.7	197

Research Question 4: What are the problems hindering the reading and internet habits of the undergraduate students in both university libraries?

Table 6 showed that majority of the respondents in OAU 132(67.0%) and U.I 63(32.0%) were faced with the problem of sitting arrangement and hostile climate condition of the library. Also, the problem of lack of good illumination were faced by the respondents from OAU 50(25.4%) and 55(29.9%) from U.I, while only few of the respondents from OAU 17(8.7%) disagree with the problem of inadequate seats and 15(7.6%) from U.I disagree with poor attitude of library staff to user. However, inadequate information sources and insufficient reading materials were also faced by the respondents from both university libraries.

Table 6: Factors Hindering Reading Information Resources

S/N	Statements	Agree		Strong Agree		Disagree		Strongly Disagree		Total
		OAU N %	UI N %	OAU N %	UI N %	OAU N %	UI N %	OAU N %	UI N %	
1	Lack of awareness of information sources	30 15.2	35 17.8	22 11.2	22 11.2	15 7.6	15 7.6	28 14.2	30 15.2	197
2	Insufficient time	25 12.7	25 12.7	18 9.1	18 9.1	30 15.7	30 15.2	21 10.7	30 15.2	197
3	Information is not accurate	12 6.1	12 6.1	15 7.6	15 7.6	50 25.2	18 9.1	40 20.3	35 17.8	197
4	Lack of user education	17 8.6	19 9.6	35 17.8	35 17.8	20 10.2	20 10.2	21 10.7	30 15.2	197
5	Inadequate information sources	35 17.8	30 15.2	22 11.2	22 11.2	30 15.2	28 14.2	15 7.6	15 7.6	197
6	Unconducive environment for library use	25 12.7	35 17.8	30 15.2	22 11.2	15 7.6	15 7.6	28 14.2	27 13.7	197
7	Poor attitude of library staff to users	77 39.0	6 3.0	67 3.4	5 2.5	20 10.2	5 2.5	7 3.6	10 5.1	197
8	Insufficient reading materials	44 2.3	32 16.2	17 8.6	25 12.7	30 15.2	14 7.1	15 7.6	20 10.2	197
9	Overcrowding in the library	5 2.5	10 5.1	15 7.6	55 27.9	12 8.1	5 2.5	8 4.1	87 44.2	197
10	Sitting arrangement	120 60.9	10 5.1	12 6.1	10 5.1	12 6.1	15 7.6	8 4.1	10 5.1	197
11	Lack of good illumination	20 10.2	30 15.2	30 15.2	25 12.7	25 12.7	38 19.3	9 4.6	20 10.2	197
12	Inadequate seats	93 47.2	2 1.0	5 2.5	65 3.2	10 5.1	5 2.5	7 3.6	10 5.1	197
13	Hostile climate condition of the library	38 19.3	38 19.3	25 12.7	25 12.7	15 7.6	20 10.2	26 3.2	10 5.1	197

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The study identified the types of information resources available by undergraduate students in the selected universities, these included books, journals, newspapers, reference resources, audio-visual materials, internet services, online public access catalogue, and e-mail services. This corresponds with Ojedokun (2006) findings that students were more comfortable with sufficient availability of information resources in the libraries.

It is germane to note that the findings of this study revealed that the respondents read more for academic purposes, online application registration and research purposes. This findings corroborates the findings of Unoh (2007) and Uwah (2004) who stated that reading is very important to undergraduate students in Nigeria because it helps them succeed in examinations in order to obtain the paper certificates that society emphasizes so much.

It is also revealed in this study that respondents read regularly on daily basis. This seems to contradict the findings of Busayo (2005) who found that undergraduate students were not habitual readers; they used the library during the session and normally deserted it the moment they were through with examinations.

Some problems hindering the reading and internet habits of the undergraduate students such as sitting arrangement, hostile climate condition of the library and lack of good illumination were factors revealed in the finding of this research work. This finding corresponds with that of Iboide & Isiugo-Abanihe (2011) in their study on redressing poor reading culture among youths in Nigeria. They lamented the phenomenon of poor reading culture, especially among youths in Nigeria.

CONCLUSION

The internet provides a wealth of information. The undergraduate students are using the internet significantly and it occupies an important place among various information sources.

The study also concluded that e-mail services and internet services were the available information resources in university libraries. Other available information resources as revealed in the study include newspapers, reference resources, books, journals audio visual materials and OPAC. The study also ascertains that the respondents read for research purposes and online application/registration purposes and use the Internet for academic purposes, examination purposes and project work.

In addition, it can also be deduced from the study that the respondents from both university libraries frequently read newspapers, novel, comic, magazine and textbook on daily basis while only few of them read text on drama on weekly basis. There are numerous factors hindering reading information resources enumerated by the

respondents, this include sitting arrangement, hostile climate condition of the library as well as lack of illumination.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Students should be encouraged to spend more time to reading by including reading hour into school curriculum.
- University libraries should be centrally located and functional so that user can easily access it and procedure for borrowing books should be flexible to stimulate students' reading interest.
- There should be prompt awareness whenever new resources such as books, e-books, e-journals etc. arrived into the library.
- University management should provide convenient reading space, well structured sitting arrangement and well illuminated area in the library for users.

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